

Senate Bill No. 597

CHAPTER 339

An act to amend Section 8545 of the Family Code, to amend Section 1506 of the Health and Safety Code, and to amend Sections 4094, 11462, 11463, 16119, 16120.1, 16121, 16121.05, and 16501.1 of, and to add Sections 366.215 and 16010.2 to, the Welfare and Institutions Code, relating to services for children.

[Approved by Governor October 11, 2009. Filed with
Secretary of State October 11, 2009.]

LEGISLATIVE COUNSEL'S DIGEST

SB 597, Liu. Child welfare services, foster care services, and adoption assistance.

(1) Existing law requires the State Department of Mental Health to establish, by regulations, no later than December 31, 1994, program standards for any facility licensed as a community treatment facility. Under existing law, until January 1, 2010, the department shall not require a community treatment facility that meets certain requirements to have 24-hour onsite licensed nursing staff.

This bill would extend applicability of the above provisions relating to onsite licensed nursing staff to January 1, 2013.

(2) Existing law, the California Community Care Facilities Act, provides for the licensure and regulation of foster family agencies, as defined, by the State Department of Social Services, including applicable personnel requirements. Violation of these provisions is a misdemeanor.

This bill would require a foster family agency that provides treatment of children in foster families to employ one full-time social work supervisor for every eight social workers, or fraction thereof, in the agency. The bill would require the implementation of this provision to cease on and after January 1, 2011, without the enactment of subsequent statutory authorization.

By changing the definition of an existing crime, this bill would impose a state-mandated local program.

(3) Existing law requires the juvenile court to conduct a hearing for the initial disposition of a dependent child of the court, and subsequent hearings to review the status of the child, as specified.

Existing law specifies the circumstances under which the court may schedule a hearing to terminate parental rights or take other specified actions with respect to placement of a child who was under 3 years of age on the date of initial removal or is a member of a sibling group, as specified.

This bill would require the court, in determining whether to schedule the hearing described above for a child under these circumstances, to take into

account barriers to a parent's ability to remain in contact with his or her child due to the parent's incarceration or institutionalization.

(4) Existing law establishes the Aid to Families with Dependent Children-Foster Care (AFDC-FC) program, under which counties provide payments to foster care providers on behalf of qualified children in foster care. The program is funded by a combination of federal, state, and county funds. Under existing law, AFDC-FC benefits are available, with specified exceptions, on behalf of qualified children under 18 years of age. Moneys from the General Fund are continuously appropriated to pay for the state's share of AFDC-FC costs.

Under existing law, foster care providers licensed as group homes have rates established by classifying each group home program and applying a standardized schedule of rates.

An adjusted schedule of rates is applicable to group home programs that receive AFDC-FC payments for services performed during the 2002–03 to 2009–10, inclusive, fiscal years.

This bill would revise RCL point ranges for group home programs that receive AFDC-FC payments for services performed during the 2009–10 fiscal year, as specified. This bill would provide that no appropriation is made pursuant to the bill for the purpose of these provisions.

Existing law reduces by 10% the standardized schedule of rates for foster family agencies, as defined, effective October 1, 2009.

This bill would give the foster family flexibility in applying the rate reduction, but would prohibit more than 10% from being deducted from the child base and increment, as defined in departmental regulations. The bill, effective October 1, 2009, would apply similar rate reductions for foster family agency rates that are not determined by the schedule of rates set forth in the department's regulations.

(5) Under existing law, the case plan is the foundation and central unifying tool in child welfare services. The components of the case plan include, when appropriate, a written description of the programs and services that will help a child, consistent with the child's best interests, prepare for the transition from foster care to independent living, for a child who is 16 years of age or older.

Existing law requires, when a child is placed in foster care, that the child's case plan include a summary of the health and education information or records, including mental health information or records, of the child.

This bill would require the State Department of Social Services, in consultation with pediatricians, health care experts, and experts in and recipients of child welfare services, to develop a plan for the ongoing oversight and coordination of health care services for a child in a foster care placement, consistent with specified federal law.

(6) Existing law provides for the Adoption Assistance Program (AAP), to be established and administered by the State Department of Social Services or the county, for the purpose of benefiting children residing in foster homes by providing the stability and security of permanent homes. The AAP provides for the payment by the department and counties, of cash assistance

to eligible families that adopt eligible children, and bases the amount of the payment on the needs of the child and the resources of the family to meet those needs.

Under existing law, at the time application for adoption of a child who is potentially eligible for AAP benefits is made, and at the time immediately prior to the finalization of the adoption decree, the department or the licensed adoption agency, whichever is appropriate, is required to provide the prospective adoptive family with designated information.

This bill would additionally require the department or licensed adoption agency to provide information regarding the federal adoption tax credit for any individual who is adopting or considering adopting a child in foster care, in accordance with specified federal law.

Existing law relating to adoption defines a special needs child as a child whose adoption without financial assistance would be unlikely because of specified characteristics or circumstances of the child.

This bill would recast and revise the definition of a special needs child, and further would require the need for adoption subsidy to be evidenced by an unsuccessful search for an adoptive home to take the child without financial assistance, except under specified circumstances. The bill would make related changes to existing adoption assistance provisions.

(7) Under existing law, the state, through the State Department of Social Services and county welfare departments, is required to establish and support a public system of statewide child welfare services.

Existing law requires the case plan for a child 16 years of age or older to include a written description of the programs and services that will help the child prepare for the transition from foster care to independent living, as specified.

This bill would require additional information pertaining to the child's transition to independent living to be provided in the 90-day period before the child attains 18 years of age, relating to, among other topics, housing, education, and employment services. By imposing additional duties upon each county, the bill would create a state-mandated local program.

(8) (A) This bill would incorporate additional changes in Section 16119 of the Welfare and Institutions Code, proposed by AB 154, to be operative only if AB 154 and this bill are both chaptered and become effective on or before January 1, 2010, and this bill is chaptered last.

(B) This bill would incorporate additional changes in Section 16501.1 of the Welfare and Institutions Code, proposed by SB 118, to be operative only if SB 118 and this bill are both chaptered and become effective on or before January 1, 2010, and this bill is chaptered last.

(9) The California Constitution requires the state to reimburse local agencies and school districts for certain costs mandated by the state. Statutory provisions establish procedures for making that reimbursement.

This bill would provide that with regard to certain mandates no reimbursement is required by this act for a specified reason.

With regard to any other mandates, this bill would provide that, if the Commission on State Mandates determines that the bill contains costs so

mandated by the state, reimbursement for those costs shall be made pursuant to the statutory provisions noted above.

The people of the State of California do enact as follows:

SECTION 1. Section 8545 of the Family Code is amended to read:

8545. "Special needs child" means a child for whom all of the following are true:

(a) It has been determined that the child cannot or should not be returned to the home of his or her parents, as evidenced by a petition for termination of parental rights, a court order terminating parental rights, or a signed relinquishment.

(b) The child has at least one of the following characteristics that is a barrier to his or her adoption:

(1) Adoptive placement without financial assistance is unlikely because of membership in a sibling group that should remain intact, or by virtue of race, ethnicity, color, language, age of three years or older, or parental background of a medical or behavioral nature that can be determined to adversely affect the development of the child.

(2) Adoptive placement without financial assistance is unlikely because the child has a mental, physical, emotional, or medical disability that has been certified by a licensed professional competent to make an assessment and operating within the scope of his or her profession. This paragraph shall also apply to children with a developmental disability as defined in subdivision (a) of Section 4512 of the Welfare and Institutions Code, including those determined to require out-of-home nonmedical care as described in Section 11464 of the Welfare and Institutions Code.

(c) The need for adoption subsidy is evidenced by an unsuccessful search for an adoptive home to take the child without financial assistance, as documented in the case file of the prospective adoptive child. The requirement for this search shall be waived when it would be against the best interest of the child because of the existence of significant emotional ties with prospective adoptive parents while in the care of these persons as a foster child.

SEC. 2. Section 1506 of the Health and Safety Code is amended to read:

1506. (a) (1) Any holder of a valid license issued by the department that authorizes the licensee to engage in any foster family agency functions, may use only a certified family home that has been certified by that agency or a licensed foster family home approved for this use by the licensing county pursuant to Section 1506.5.

(2) Any home selected and certified for the reception and care of children by that licensee shall not, during the time it is certified and used only by that agency for these placements or care, be subject to Section 1508. A certified family home may not be concurrently licensed as a foster family home or as any other licensed residential facility.

(3) A child with a developmental disability who is placed in a certified family home by a foster family agency that is operating under agreement with the regional center responsible for that child may remain in the certified family home after the age of 18 years. The determination regarding whether and how long he or she may remain as a resident after the age of 18 years shall be made through the agreement of all parties involved, including the resident, the foster parent, the foster family agency social worker, the resident's regional center case manager, and the resident's parent, legal guardian, or conservator, as appropriate. This determination shall include a needs and service plan that contains an assessment of the child's needs to ensure continued compatibility with the other children in placement. The needs and service plan shall be completed no more than six months prior to the child's eighteenth birthday. The assessment shall be documented and maintained in the child's file with the foster family agency.

(b) (1) A foster family agency shall certify to the department that the home has met the department's licensing standards. A foster family agency may require a family home to meet additional standards or be compatible with its treatment approach.

(2) The foster family agency shall issue a certificate of approval to the certified family home upon its determination that it has met the standards established by the department and before the placement of any child in the home. The certificate shall be valid for a period not to exceed one year. The annual recertification shall require a certified family home to complete at least 12 hours of structured applicable training or continuing education. At least one hour of training during the first six months following initial certification shall be dedicated to meeting the requirements of paragraph (1) of subdivision (b) of Section 11174.1 of the Penal Code.

(3) If the agency determines that the home no longer meets the standards, it shall notify the department and the local placing agency.

(c) The department shall develop licensing regulations differentiating between foster family agencies that provide treatment of children in foster families and those that provide nontreatment services.

(d) As used in this chapter, "certified family home" means a family residence certified by a licensed foster family agency and issued a certificate of approval by that agency as meeting licensing standards, and used only by that foster family agency for placements.

(e) (1) Requirements for social work personnel for a foster family agency shall be a master's degree from an accredited or state approved graduate school in social work or social welfare, or equivalent education and experience, as determined by the state department.

(2) Persons who possess a master's degree from an accredited or state approved graduate school in any of the following areas, or equivalent education and experience, as determined by the state department, shall be considered to be qualified to perform social work activities in a foster family agency:

- (A) Marriage, family, and child counseling.
- (B) Child psychology.

- (C) Child development.
- (D) Counseling psychology.
- (E) Social psychology.
- (F) Clinical psychology.

(G) Educational psychology, consistent with the scope of practice as described in Section 4986.10 of the Business and Professions Code.

(H) Education, with emphasis on counseling.

(f) (1) In addition to the degree specifications in subdivision (e), all of the following coursework and field practice or experience, as defined in departmental regulations, shall be required of all new hires for the position of social work personnel effective January 1, 1995:

(A) At least three semester units of field practice at the master's level or six months' full-time equivalent experience in a public or private social service agency setting.

(B) At least nine semester units of coursework related to human development or human behavior, or, within the first year of employment, experience working with children and families as a major responsibility of the position under the supervision of a supervising social worker.

(C) At least three semester units in working with minority populations or six months of experience in working with minority populations or training in cultural competency and working with minority populations within the first six months of employment as a condition of employment.

(D) At least three semester units in child welfare or at least six months of experience in a public or private child welfare social services setting for a nonsupervisory social worker. A supervising social worker shall have two years' experience in a public or private child welfare social services setting.

(2) (A) Persons who do not meet the requirements specified in subdivision (e) or (f) may apply for an exception as provided for in subdivisions (g) and (h).

(B) Exceptions granted by the department prior to January 1, 1995, shall remain in effect.

(3) (A) Persons who are hired as social work personnel on or after January 1, 1995, who do not meet the requirements listed in this subdivision shall be required to successfully meet those requirements in order to be employed as social work personnel in a foster family agency.

(B) Employees who were hired prior to January 1, 1995, shall not be required to meet the requirements of this subdivision in order to remain employed as social work personnel in a foster family agency.

(4) Coursework and field practice or experience completed to fulfill the degree requirements of subdivision (e) may be used to satisfy the requirements of this subdivision.

(g) Individuals seeking an exception to the requirements of subdivision (e) or (f) based on completion of equivalent education and experience shall apply to the department by the process established by the department.

(h) The State Department of Social Services shall be required to complete the process for the exception to minimum education and experience requirements described in subdivisions (e) and (f) within 30 days of receiving

the exception application of social work personnel or supervising social worker qualifications from the foster family agency.

(i) The department shall review the feasibility of instituting a licensure category to cover foster homes that are established specifically to care for and supervise adults with developmental disabilities, as defined in subdivision (a) of Section 4512 of the Welfare and Institutions Code, to prevent the institutionalization of those individuals.

(j) For purposes of this section, “social work personnel” means supervising social workers as well as nonsupervisory social workers.

(k) A foster family agency that provides treatment of children in foster families shall employ one full-time social work supervisor for every eight social workers or fraction thereof in the agency. This subdivision shall not be implemented on or after January 1, 2011, without the enactment of subsequent statutory authorization.

SEC. 3. Section 366.215 is added to the Welfare and Institutions Code, to read:

366.215. With respect to a hearing held pursuant to subdivision (e) of Section 366.21, if the child in question was under three years of age on the date of the initial removal, or is a member of a sibling group described in subparagraph (C) of paragraph (1) of subdivision (a) of Section 361.5, the court, in determining whether to schedule a hearing pursuant to Section 366.26, shall take into account any particular barriers to a parent’s ability to maintain contact with his or her child due to the parent’s incarceration or institutionalization.

SEC. 4. Section 4094 of the Welfare and Institutions Code is amended to read:

4094. (a) The State Department of Mental Health shall establish, by regulations adopted at the earliest possible date, but no later than December 31, 1994, program standards for any facility licensed as a community treatment facility. This section shall apply only to community treatment facilities described in this subdivision.

(b) A certification of compliance issued by the State Department of Mental Health shall be a condition of licensure for the community treatment facility by the State Department of Social Services. The department may, upon the request of a county, delegate the certification and supervision of a community treatment facility to the county department of mental health.

(c) The State Department of Mental Health shall adopt regulations to include, but not be limited to, the following:

(1) Procedures by which the Director of Mental Health shall certify that a facility requesting licensure as a community treatment facility pursuant to Chapter 3 (commencing with Section 1500) of Division 2 of the Health and Safety Code is in compliance with program standards established pursuant to this section.

(2) Procedures by which the Director of Mental Health shall deny a certification to a facility or decertify a facility that is licensed as a community treatment facility pursuant to Chapter 3 (commencing with Section 1500) of Division 2 of the Health and Safety Code, but no longer complying with

program standards established pursuant to this section, in accordance with Chapter 5 (commencing with Section 11500) of Part 1 of Division 3 of Title 2 of the Government Code.

(3) Provisions for site visits by the State Department of Mental Health for the purpose of reviewing a facility's compliance with program standards established pursuant to this section.

(4) Provisions for the community care licensing staff of the State Department of Social Services to report to the State Department of Mental Health when there is reasonable cause to believe that a community treatment facility is not in compliance with program standards established pursuant to this section.

(5) Provisions for the State Department of Mental Health to provide consultation and documentation to the State Department of Social Services in any administrative proceeding regarding denial, suspension, or revocation of a community treatment facility license.

(d) The standards adopted by regulations pursuant to subdivision (a) shall include, but not be limited to, standards for treatment, staffing, and for the use of psychotropic medication, discipline, and restraints in the facilities. The standards shall also meet the requirements of Section 4094.5.

(e) (1) Until January 1, 2013, all of the following are applicable:

(A) A community treatment facility shall not be required by the State Department of Mental Health to have 24-hour onsite licensed nursing staff, but shall retain at least one full-time, or full-time-equivalent, registered nurse onsite if both of the following are applicable:

(i) The facility does not use mechanical restraint.

(ii) The facility only admits children who have been assessed, at the point of admission, by a licensed primary care provider and a licensed psychiatrist, who have concluded, with respect to each child, that the child does not require medical services that require 24-hour nursing coverage. For purposes of this section, a "primary care provider" includes a person defined in Section 14254, or a nurse practitioner who has the responsibility for providing initial and primary care to patients, for maintaining the continuity of care, and for initiating referral for specialist care.

(B) Other medical or nursing staff shall be available on call to provide appropriate services, when necessary, within one hour.

(C) All direct care staff shall be trained in first aid and cardiopulmonary resuscitation, and in emergency intervention techniques and methods approved by the Community Care Licensing Division of the State Department of Social Services.

(2) The State Department of Mental Health may adopt emergency regulations as necessary to implement this subdivision. The adoption of these regulations shall be deemed to be an emergency and necessary for the immediate preservation of the public peace, health and safety, and general welfare. The regulations shall be exempt from review by the Office of Administrative Law and shall become effective immediately upon filing with the Secretary of State. The regulations shall not remain in effect more than 180 days unless the adopting agency complies with all the provisions

of Chapter 3.5 (commencing with Section 11340) of Part 1 of Division 3 of Title 2 of the Government Code, as required by subdivision (e) of Section 11346.1 of the Government Code.

(f) During the initial public comment period for the adoption of the regulations required by this section, the community care facility licensing regulations proposed by the State Department of Social Services and the program standards proposed by the State Department of Mental Health shall be presented simultaneously.

(g) A minor shall be admitted to a community treatment facility only if the requirements of Section 4094.5 and either of the following conditions are met:

(1) The minor is within the jurisdiction of the juvenile court, and has made voluntary application for mental health services pursuant to Section 6552.

(2) Informed consent is given by a parent, guardian, conservator, or other person having custody of the minor.

(h) Any minor admitted to a community treatment facility shall have the same due process rights afforded to a minor who may be admitted to a state hospital, pursuant to the holding in *In re Roger S.* (1977) 19 Cal.3d 921. Minors who are wards or dependents of the court and to whom this subdivision applies shall be afforded due process in accordance with Section 6552 and related case law, including *In re Michael E.* (1975) 15 Cal.3d 183. Regulations adopted pursuant to Section 4094 shall specify the procedures for ensuring these rights, including provisions for notification of rights and the time and place of hearings.

(i) Notwithstanding Section 13340 of the Government Code, the sum of forty-five thousand dollars (\$45,000) is hereby appropriated annually from the General Fund to the State Department of Mental Health for one personnel year to carry out the provisions of this section.

SEC. 5. Section 11462 of the Welfare and Institutions Code is amended to read:

11462. (a) (1) Effective July 1, 1990, foster care providers licensed as group homes, as defined in departmental regulations, including public child care institutions, as defined in Section 11402.5, shall have rates established by classifying each group home program and applying the standardized schedule of rates. The department shall collect information from group providers beginning January 1, 1990, in order to classify each group home program.

(2) Notwithstanding paragraph (1), foster care providers licensed as group homes shall have rates established only if the group home is organized and operated on a nonprofit basis as required under subdivision (h) of Section 11400. The department shall terminate the rate effective January 1, 1993, of any group home not organized and operated on a nonprofit basis as required under subdivision (h) of Section 11400.

(3) (A) The department shall determine, consistent with the requirements of this chapter and other relevant requirements under law, the rate classification level (RCL) for each group home program on a biennial basis.

Submission of the biennial rate application shall be made according to a schedule determined by the department.

(B) The department shall adopt regulations to implement this paragraph. The adoption, amendment, repeal, or readoption of a regulation authorized by this paragraph is deemed to be necessary for the immediate preservation of the public peace, health and safety, or general welfare, for purposes of Sections 11346.1 and 11349.6 of the Government Code, and the department is hereby exempted from the requirement to describe specific facts showing the need for immediate action.

(b) A group home program shall be initially classified, for purposes of emergency regulations, according to the level of care and services to be provided using a point system developed by the department and described in the report, "The Classification of Group Home Programs under the Standardized Schedule of Rates System," prepared by the State Department of Social Services, August 30, 1989.

(c) The rate for each RCL has been determined by the department with data from the AFDC-FC Group Home Rate Classification Pilot Study. The rates effective July 1, 1990, were developed using 1985 calendar year costs and reflect adjustments to the costs for each fiscal year, starting with the 1986-87 fiscal year, by the amount of the California Necessities Index computed pursuant to the methodology described in Section 11453. The data obtained by the department using 1985 calendar year costs shall be updated and revised by January 1, 1993.

(d) As used in this section, "standardized schedule of rates" means a listing of the 14 rate classification levels, and the single rate established for each RCL.

(e) Except as specified in paragraph (1), the department shall determine the RCL for each group home program on a prospective basis, according to the level of care and services that the group home operator projects will be provided during the period of time for which the rate is being established.

(1) (A) For new and existing providers requesting the establishment of an RCL, and for existing group home programs requesting an RCL increase, the department shall determine the RCL no later than 13 months after the effective date of the provisional rate. The determination of the RCL shall be based on a program audit of documentation and other information that verifies the level of care and supervision provided by the group home program during a period of the two full calendar months or 60 consecutive days, whichever is longer, preceding the date of the program audit, unless the group home program requests a lower RCL. The program audit shall not cover the first six months of operation under the provisional rate. Pending the department's issuance of the program audit report that determines the RCL for the group home program, the group home program shall be eligible to receive a provisional rate that shall be based on the level of care and service that the group home program proposes it will provide. The group home program shall be eligible to receive only the RCL determined by the department during the pendency of any appeal of the department's RCL determination.

(B) A group home program may apply for an increase in its RCL no earlier than two years from the date the department has determined the group home program's rate, unless the host county, the primary placing county, or a regional consortium of counties submits to the department in writing that the program is needed in that county, that the provider is capable of effectively and efficiently operating the proposed program, and that the provider is willing and able to accept AFDC-FC children for placement who are determined by the placing agency to need the level of care and services that will be provided by the program.

(C) To ensure efficient administration of the department's audit responsibilities, and to avoid the fraudulent creation of records, group home programs shall make records that are relevant to the RCL determination available to the department in a timely manner. Except as provided in this section, the department may refuse to consider, for purposes of determining the rate, any documents that are relevant to the determination of the RCL that are not made available by the group home provider by the date the group home provider requests a hearing on the department's RCL determination. The department may refuse to consider, for purposes of determining the rate, the following records, unless the group home provider makes the records available to the department during the fieldwork portion of the department's program audit:

- (i) Records of each employee's full name, home address, occupation, and social security number.
- (ii) Time records showing when the employee begins and ends each work period, meal periods, split shift intervals, and total daily hours worked.
- (iii) Total wages paid each payroll period.
- (iv) Records required to be maintained by licensed group home providers under Title 22 of the California Code of Regulations that are relevant to the RCL determination.

(D) To minimize financial abuse in the startup of group home programs, when the department's RCL determination is more than three levels lower than the RCL level proposed by the group home provider, and the group home provider does not appeal the department's RCL determination, the department shall terminate the rate of a group home program 45 days after issuance of its program audit report. When the group home provider requests a hearing on the department's RCL determination, and the RCL determined by the director under subparagraph (E) is more than three levels lower than the RCL level proposed by the group home provider, the department shall terminate the rate of a group home program within 30 days of issuance of the director's decision. Notwithstanding the reapplication provisions in subparagraph (B), the department shall deny any request for a new or increased RCL from a group home provider whose RCL is terminated pursuant to this subparagraph, for a period of no greater than two years from the effective date of the RCL termination.

(E) A group home provider may request a hearing of the department's RCL determination under subparagraph (A) no later than 30 days after the date the department issues its RCL determination. The department's RCL

determination shall be final if the group home provider does not request a hearing within the prescribed time. Within 60 days of receipt of the request for hearing, the department shall conduct a hearing on the RCL determination. The standard of proof shall be the preponderance of the evidence and the burden of proof shall be on the department. The hearing officer shall issue the proposed decision within 45 days of the close of the evidentiary record. The director shall adopt, reject, or modify the proposed decision, or refer the matter back to the hearing officer for additional evidence or findings within 100 days of issuance of the proposed decision. If the director takes no action on the proposed decision within the prescribed time, the proposed decision shall take effect by operation of law.

(2) Group home programs that fail to maintain at least the level of care and services associated with the RCL upon which their rate was established shall inform the department. The department shall develop regulations specifying procedures to be applied when a group home fails to maintain the level of services projected, including, but not limited to, rate reduction and recovery of overpayments.

(3) The department shall not reduce the rate, establish an overpayment, or take other actions pursuant to paragraph (2) for any period that a group home program maintains the level of care and services associated with the RCL for children actually residing in the facility. Determinations of levels of care and services shall be made in the same way as modifications of overpayments are made pursuant to paragraph (2) of subdivision (b) of Section 11466.2.

(4) A group home program that substantially changes its staffing pattern from that reported in the group home program statement shall provide notification of this change to all counties that have placed children currently in care. This notification shall be provided whether or not the RCL for the program may change as a result of the change in staffing pattern.

(f) (1) The standardized schedule of rates for the 2002–03, 2003–04, 2004–05, 2005–06, 2006–07, and 2007–08 fiscal years is:

Rate	Point Ranges	FY 2002-03, 2003-04, 2004-05, 2005-06, 2006-07, and 2007-08
Classification		Standard Rate
Level		
1	Under 60	\$1,454
2	60- 89	1,835
3	90-119	2,210
4	120-149	2,589
5	150-179	2,966
6	180-209	3,344
7	210-239	3,723
8	240-269	4,102
9	270-299	4,479
10	300-329	4,858
11	330-359	5,234

12	360-389	5,613
13	390-419	5,994
14	420 & Up	6,371

(2) (A) For group home programs that receive AFDC-FC payments for services performed during the 2002–03, 2003–04, 2004–05, 2005–06, 2006–07, 2007–08, 2008–09, and 2009–10 fiscal years, the adjusted RCL point ranges below shall be used for establishing the biennial rates for existing programs, pursuant to paragraph (3) of subdivision (a) and in performing program audits and in determining any resulting rate reduction, overpayment assessment, or other actions pursuant to paragraph (2) of subdivision (e):

Rate Classification	Adjusted Point Ranges for the 2002-03, 2003-04, 2004-05, 2005-06, 2006-07, 2007-08, 2008-09, and 2009-10
Level	Fiscal Years
1	Under 54
2	54- 81
3	82-110
4	111-138
5	139-167
6	168-195
7	196-224
8	225-253
9	254-281
10	282-310
11	311-338
12	339-367
13	368-395
14	396 & Up

(B) Notwithstanding subparagraph (A), foster care providers operating group homes during the 2002–03, 2003–04, 2004–05, 2005–06, 2006–07, 2007–08, 2008–09, and 2009–10 fiscal years shall remain responsible for ensuring the health and safety of the children placed in their programs in accordance with existing applicable provisions of the Health and Safety Code and community care licensing regulations, as contained in Title 22 of the Code of California Regulations.

(C) Subparagraph (A) shall not apply to program audits of group home programs with provisional rates established pursuant to paragraph (1) of subdivision (e). For those program audits, the RCL point ranges in paragraph (1) shall be used.

(D) Rates applicable for the 2009–10 fiscal year pursuant to the act that adds this subparagraph shall be effective October 1, 2009.

(3) (A) For group home programs that receive AFDC-FC payments for services performed during the 2009–10 fiscal year the adjusted RCL point ranges below shall be used for establishing the biennial rates for existing programs, pursuant to paragraph (3) of subdivision (a) and in performing program audits and in determining any resulting rate reduction, overpayment assessment, or other actions pursuant to paragraph (2) of subdivision (e):

Rate Classification Level	Adjusted Point Ranges for the 2009–10 Fiscal Year
1	Under 39
2	39-64
3	65-90
4	91-115
5	116-141
6	142-167
7	168-192
8	193-218
9	219-244
10	245-270
11	271-295
12	296-321
13	322-347
14	348 & Up

(B) Notwithstanding subparagraph (A), foster care providers operating group homes during the 2009–10 fiscal year shall remain responsible for ensuring the health and safety of the children placed in their programs in accordance with existing applicable provisions of the Health and Safety Code and community care licensing regulations as contained in Title 22 of the California Code of Regulations.

(C) Subparagraph (A) shall not apply to program audits of group home programs with provisional rates established pursuant to paragraph (1) of subdivision (e). For those program audits, the RCL point ranges in paragraph (1) shall be used.

(g) (1) (A) For the 1999–2000 fiscal year, the standardized rate for each RCL shall be adjusted by an amount equal to the California Necessities Index computed pursuant to the methodology described in Section 11453. The resultant amounts shall constitute the new standardized schedule of rates, subject to further adjustment pursuant to subparagraph (B).

(B) In addition to the adjustment in subparagraph (A), commencing January 1, 2000, the standardized rate for each RCL shall be increased by 2.36 percent, rounded to the nearest dollar. The resultant amounts shall constitute the new standardized schedule of rates.

(2) Beginning with the 2000–01 fiscal year, the standardized schedule of rates shall be adjusted annually by an amount equal to the CNI computed

pursuant to Section 11453, subject to the availability of funds. The resultant amounts shall constitute the new standardized schedule of rates.

(3) Effective January 1, 2001, the amount included in the standard rate for each Rate Classification Level (RCL) for the salaries, wages, and benefits for staff providing child care and supervision or performing social work activities, or both, shall be increased by 10 percent. This additional funding shall be used by group home programs solely to supplement staffing, salaries, wages, and benefit levels of staff specified in this paragraph. The standard rate for each RCL shall be recomputed using this adjusted amount and the resultant rates shall constitute the new standardized schedule of rates. The department may require a group home receiving this additional funding to certify that the funding was utilized in accordance with the provisions of this section.

(4) Effective January 1, 2008, the amount included in the standard rate for each RCL for the wages for staff providing child care and supervision or performing social work activities, or both, shall be increased by 5 percent, and the amount included for the payroll taxes and other employer-paid benefits for these staff shall be increased from 20.325 percent to 24 percent. The standard rate for each RCL shall be recomputed using these adjusted amounts, and the resulting rates shall constitute the new standardized schedule of rates.

(5) The new standardized schedule of rates as provided for in paragraph (4) shall be reduced by 10 percent, effective October 1, 2009, and the resulting rates shall constitute the new standardized schedule of rates.

(6) The rates of licensed group home providers, whose rates are not established under the standardized schedule of rates, shall be reduced by 10 percent, effective October 1, 2009.

(h) The standardized schedule of rates pursuant to subdivisions (f) and (g) shall be implemented as follows:

(1) Any group home program that received an AFDC-FC rate in the prior fiscal year at or above the standard rate for the RCL in the current fiscal year shall continue to receive that rate.

(2) Any group home program that received an AFDC-FC rate in the prior fiscal year below the standard rate for the RCL in the current fiscal year shall receive the RCL rate for the current year.

(i) (1) The department shall not establish a rate for a new program of a new or existing provider, or for an existing program at a new location of an existing provider, unless the provider submits a letter of recommendation from the host county, the primary placing county, or a regional consortium of counties that includes all of the following:

(A) That the program is needed by that county.

(B) That the provider is capable of effectively and efficiently operating the program.

(C) That the provider is willing and able to accept AFDC-FC children for placement who are determined by the placing agency to need the level of care and services that will be provided by the program.

(D) That, if the letter of recommendation is not being issued by the host county, the primary placing county has notified the host county of its intention to issue the letter and the host county was given the opportunity 30 days to respond to this notification and to discuss options with the primary placing county.

(2) The department shall encourage the establishment of consortia of county placing agencies on a regional basis for the purpose of making decisions and recommendations about the need for, and use of, group home programs and other foster care providers within the regions.

(3) The department shall annually conduct a county-by-county survey to determine the unmet placement needs of children placed pursuant to Section 300 and Section 601 or 602, and shall publish its findings by November 1 of each year.

(j) The department shall develop regulations specifying ratesetting procedures for program expansions, reductions, or modifications, including increases or decreases in licensed capacity, or increases or decreases in level of care or services.

(k) (1) For the purpose of this subdivision, “program change” means any alteration to an existing group home program planned by a provider that will increase the RCL or AFDC-FC rate. An increase in the licensed capacity or other alteration to an existing group home program that does not increase the RCL or AFDC-FC rate shall not constitute a program change.

(2) For the 1998–99, 1999–2000, and 2000–01 fiscal years, the rate for a group home program shall not increase, as the result of a program change, from the rate established for the program effective July 1, 2000, and as adjusted pursuant to subparagraph (B) of paragraph (1) of subdivision (g), except as provided in paragraph (3).

(3) (A) For the 1998–99, 1999–2000, and 2000–01 fiscal years, the department shall not establish a rate for a new program of a new or existing provider or approve a program change for an existing provider that either increases the program’s RCL or AFDC-FC rate, or increases the licensed capacity of the program as a result of decreases in another program with a lower RCL or lower AFDC-FC rate that is operated by that provider, unless both of the following conditions are met:

(i) The licensee obtains a letter of recommendation from the host county, primary placing county, or regional consortium of counties regarding the proposed program change or new program.

(ii) The county determines that there is no increased cost to the General Fund.

(B) Notwithstanding subparagraph (A), the department may grant a request for a new program or program change, not to exceed 25 beds, statewide, if both of the following conditions are met:

(i) The licensee obtains a letter of recommendation from the host county, primary placing county, or regional consortium of counties regarding the proposed program change or new program.

(ii) The department determines that the new program or program change will result in a reduction of referrals to state hospitals during the 1998–99 fiscal year.

(l) General unrestricted or undesignated private charitable donations and contributions made to charitable or nonprofit organizations shall not be deducted from the cost of providing services pursuant to this section. The donations and contributions shall not be considered in any determination of maximum expenditures made by the department.

(m) The department shall, by October 1 of each year, commencing October 1, 1992, provide the Joint Legislative Budget Committee with a list of any new departmental requirements established during the previous fiscal year concerning the operation of group homes, and of any unusual, industrywide increase in costs associated with the provision of group care that may have significant fiscal impact on providers of group homes care. The committee may, in fiscal year 1993–94 and beyond, use the list to determine whether an appropriation for rate adjustments is needed in the subsequent fiscal year.

SEC. 5.5. Section 11463 of the Welfare and Institutions Code is amended to read:

11463. (a) (1) The department, with the advice, assistance, and cooperation of the counties and foster care providers, shall develop, implement, and maintain a ratesetting system for foster family agencies.

(2) No county shall be reimbursed for any percentage increases in payments, made on behalf of AFDC-FC funded children who are placed with foster family agencies, that exceed the percentage cost-of-living increase provided in any fiscal year beginning on January 1, 1990, as specified in subdivision (c) of Section 11461.

(b) The department shall develop regulations specifying the purposes, types, and services of foster family agencies, including the use of those agencies for the provision of emergency shelter care. A distinction, for ratesetting purposes, shall be drawn between foster family agencies that provide treatment of children in foster families and those that provide nontreatment services.

(c) The department shall develop and maintain regulations specifying the procedure for the appeal of department decisions about the setting of an agency's rate.

(d) On and after July 1, 1998, the schedule of rates, and the components used in the rate calculations specified in the department's regulations, for foster family agencies shall be increased by 6 percent, rounded to the nearest dollar. The resultant amounts shall constitute the new schedule of rates for foster family agencies.

(e) (1) On and after July 1, 1999, the schedule of rates and the components used in the rate calculations specified in the department's regulations for foster family agencies shall be adjusted by an amount equal to the California Necessities Index computed pursuant to Section 11453, rounded to the nearest dollar, subject to the availability of funds. The

resultant amounts shall constitute the new schedule of rates for foster family agencies, subject to further adjustment pursuant to paragraph (2).

(2) In addition to the adjustment specified in paragraph (1), commencing January 1, 2000, the schedule of rates and the components used in the rate calculations specified in the department's regulations for foster family agencies shall be increased by 2.36 percent, rounded to the nearest dollar. The resultant amounts shall constitute the new schedule of rates for foster family agencies.

(f) For the 1999–2000 fiscal year, foster family agency rates that are not determined by the schedule of rates set forth in the department's regulations, shall be increased by the same percentage as provided in subdivision (e).

(g) For the 2000–01 fiscal year and each fiscal year thereafter, without a county share of cost, notwithstanding subdivision (c) of Section 15200, the foster family agency rate shall be supplemented by one hundred dollars (\$100) for clothing per year per child in care, subject to the availability of funds. The supplemental payment shall be used to supplement, and shall not be used to supplant, any clothing allowance paid in addition to the foster family agency rate.

(h) In addition to the adjustment made pursuant to subdivision (e), the component for social work activities in the rate calculation specified in the department's regulations for foster family agencies shall be increased by 10 percent, effective January 1, 2001. This additional funding shall be used by foster family agencies solely to supplement staffing, salaries, wages, and benefit levels of staff performing social work activities. The schedule of rates shall be recomputed using the adjusted amount for social work activities. The resultant amounts shall constitute the new schedule of rates for foster family agencies. The department may require a foster family agency receiving this additional funding to certify that the funding was utilized in accordance with the provisions of this section.

(i) The increased rate provided by subparagraph (C) of paragraph (1) of subdivision (d) of Section 11461 shall not be used to compute the monthly amount that may be paid to licensed foster family agencies for the placement of children in certified foster homes.

(j) The total foster family agency rate by age group in effect as of January 1, 2008, paid to licensed foster family agencies for the placement of children in certified foster family homes, shall be reduced by 10 percent, effective October 1, 2009. The foster family agency shall have flexibility in applying the reduction, however, no more than 10 percent shall be deducted from the child base and increment, as defined in departmental regulations.

(k) Effective October 1, 2009, the total foster family agency rate by age group, in effect for those agency rates that are not determined by the schedule of rates set forth in the department's regulations, shall be reduced by the same percentage and in the same manner as provided for in subdivision (j).

(l) (1) The department shall determine, consistent with the requirements of this section and other relevant requirements under law, the rate category for each foster family agency on a biennial basis. Submission of the biennial

rate application shall be according to a schedule determined by the department.

(2) The department shall adopt regulations to implement this subdivision. The adoption, amendment, repeal, or readoption of a regulation authorized by this subdivision is deemed to be necessary for the immediate preservation of the public peace, health and safety, or general welfare, for purposes of Sections 11346.1 and 11349.6 of the Government Code, and the department is hereby exempted from the requirement to describe specific facts showing the need for immediate action.

SEC. 6. Section 16010.2 is added to the Welfare and Institutions Code, to read:

16010.2. The department, in consultation with pediatricians, other health care experts, including public health nurses, and experts in and recipients of child welfare services, including parents, shall develop a plan for the ongoing oversight and coordination of health care services for a child in a foster care placement. The plan shall ensure a coordinated strategy to identify and respond to the health care needs of foster children, including mental health and dental needs, consistent with Section 205 of the federal Fostering Connections to Success and Increasing Adoptions Act of 2008 (Public Law 110-351).

SEC. 7. Section 16119 of the Welfare and Institutions Code is amended to read:

16119. (a) At the time application for adoption of a child who is potentially eligible for Adoption Assistance Program benefits is made, and at the time immediately prior to the finalization of the adoption decree, the department or the licensed adoption agency, whichever is appropriate, shall provide the prospective adoptive family with information, in writing, on the availability of Adoption Assistance Program benefits, with an explanation of the difference between these benefits and foster care payments. The department or the licensed adoption agency shall also provide the prospective adoptive family with information, in writing, on the availability of reimbursement for the nonrecurring expenses incurred in the adoption of the Adoption Assistance Program eligible child. The department or licensed adoption agency shall also provide the prospective adoptive family with information on the availability of mental health services through the Medi-Cal program or other programs. The department or licensed adoption agency shall also provide information regarding the federal adoption tax credit for any individual who is adopting or considering adopting a child in foster care, in accordance with Section 403 of the federal Fostering Connections to Success and Increasing Adoptions Act of 2008 (Public Law 110-351).

(b) The department or the licensed agency shall encourage families that elect not to sign an adoption assistance agreement to sign a deferred adoption assistance agreement.

(c) The department or the county, whichever is responsible for determining the child's eligibility for the Adoption Assistance Program, shall assess the needs of the child and the circumstances of the family.

(d) (1) The amount of an adoption assistance cash benefit, if any, shall be a negotiated amount based upon the needs of the child and the circumstances of the family. There shall be no means test used to determine an adoptive family's eligibility for the Adoption Assistance Program, or the amount of adoption assistance payments. In those instances where an otherwise eligible child does not require a cash benefit, Medi-Cal eligibility may be established for the child, as needed.

(2) For purposes of paragraph (1), "circumstances of the family" includes the family's ability to incorporate the child into the household in relation to the lifestyle, standard of living, and future plans and to the overall capacity to meet the immediate and future plans and needs, including education, of the child.

(e) The department or the licensed adoption agency shall inform the prospective adoptive family regarding the county responsible for providing financial aid to the adoptive family in an amount determined pursuant to Sections 16120 and 16120.1.

(f) The department or the licensed adoption agency shall inform the prospective adoptive family that the adoptive parents will continue to receive benefits in the agreed upon amount unless one of the following occurs:

(1) The department determines that the adoptive parents are no longer legally responsible for the support of the child.

(2) The department determines that the child is no longer receiving support from the adoptive family.

(3) The adoption assistance payment exceeds the amount that the child would have been eligible for in a licensed foster home.

(4) The adoptive parents demonstrate a need for an increased payment.

(5) The adoptive parents voluntarily reduce or terminate payments.

(6) The adopted child has an extraordinary need that was not anticipated at the time the amount of the adoption assistance was originally negotiated.

SEC. 7.5. Section 16119 of the Welfare and Institutions Code is amended to read:

16119. (a) At the time application for adoption of a child who is potentially eligible for Adoption Assistance Program benefits is made, and at the time immediately prior to the finalization of the adoption decree, the department or the licensed adoption agency, whichever is appropriate, shall provide the prospective adoptive family with information, in writing, on the availability of Adoption Assistance Program benefits, with an explanation of the difference between these benefits and foster care payments. The department or the licensed adoption agency shall also provide the prospective adoptive family with information, in writing, on the availability of reimbursement for the nonrecurring expenses incurred in the adoption of the Adoption Assistance Program eligible child. The department or licensed adoption agency shall also provide the prospective adoptive family with information on the availability of mental health services through the Medi-Cal program or other programs. The department or licensed adoption agency shall also provide information regarding the federal adoption tax credit for any individual who is adopting or considering adopting a child in

foster care, in accordance with Section 403 of the federal Fostering Connections to Success and Increasing Adoptions Act of 2008 (Public Law 110-351).

(b) The department or the licensed agency shall encourage families that elect not to sign an adoption assistance agreement to sign a deferred adoption assistance agreement.

(c) The department or the county, whichever is responsible for determining the child's eligibility for the Adoption Assistance Program, shall assess the needs of the child and the circumstances of the family.

(d) (1) The amount of an adoption assistance cash benefit, if any, shall be a negotiated amount based upon the needs of the child and the circumstances of the family. There shall be no means test used to determine an adoptive family's eligibility for the Adoption Assistance Program, or the amount of adoption assistance payments. In those instances where an otherwise eligible child does not require a cash benefit, Medi-Cal eligibility may be established for the child, as needed.

(2) For purposes of paragraph (1), "circumstances of the family" includes the family's ability to incorporate the child into the household in relation to the lifestyle, standard of living, and future plans and to the overall capacity to meet the immediate and future plans and needs, including education, of the child.

(e) The department or the licensed adoption agency shall inform the prospective adoptive family regarding the county responsible for providing financial aid to the adoptive family in an amount determined pursuant to Sections 16120 and 16120.1.

(f) The department or the licensed adoption agency shall inform the prospective adoptive family that the adoptive parents will continue to receive benefits in the agreed upon amount unless one of the following occurs:

(1) The department determines that the adoptive parents are no longer legally responsible for the support of the child.

(2) The department determines that the child is no longer receiving support from the adoptive family.

(3) The adoption assistance payment exceeds the amount that the child would have been eligible for in a licensed foster home.

(4) The adoptive parents demonstrate a need for an increased payment.

(5) The adoptive parents voluntarily reduce or terminate payments.

(6) The adopted child has an extraordinary need that was not anticipated at the time the amount of the adoption assistance was originally negotiated.

(g) The department or licensed adoption agency shall inform the prospective adoptive family of their potential eligibility for a federal tax credit under Section 23 of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 (26 U.S.C. Sec. 23) and a state tax credit under Section 17052.25 of the Revenue and Taxation Code.

SEC. 8. Section 16120.1 of the Welfare and Institutions Code is amended to read:

16120.1. Upon the authorization of the department or, where appropriate, the county responsible for determining the child's Adoption Assistance

Program eligibility status and for providing financial aid, the responsible county shall directly reimburse eligible individuals for reasonable nonrecurring expenses, as defined by the department, incurred as a result of the adoption of a special needs child, as defined in subdivisions (a) to (c), inclusive, and subdivision (l), of Section 16120. The state shall provide payment to the county for the reimbursement. Reimbursements shall conform to the eligibility criteria and claiming procedures established by the department and shall be subject to the following conditions:

(a) The amount of the payment shall be determined through agreement between the adopting parent or parents and the department or the county responsible for determining the child's Adoption Assistance Program eligibility status and for providing financial aid. The agreement shall indicate the nature and the amount of the nonrecurring expenses to be paid. Payments shall be limited to an amount not to exceed four hundred dollars (\$400) for each placement eligible for the Adoption Assistance Program.

(b) There shall be no income eligibility requirement for an adoptive parent or adoptive parents in determining whether payments for nonrecurring expenses shall be made.

(c) Reimbursement for nonrecurring expenses shall be limited to costs incurred by or on behalf of an adoptive parent or adoptive parents that are not reimbursed from other sources. No payments shall be made under this section if the federal program for reimbursement of nonrecurring expenses for the adoption of children eligible for the Adoption Assistance Program pursuant to Section 673 of Title 42 of the United States Code is terminated.

(d) Reimbursement for nonrecurring expenses shall be in addition to any adoption expenses paid pursuant to Section 16121 and shall not be included in the computation of maximum benefits for which the adoptive family is eligible pursuant to Section 16121.

SEC. 9. Section 16121 of the Welfare and Institutions Code is amended to read:

16121. (a) In accordance with the adoption assistance agreement, the adoptive family shall be paid an amount of aid based on the child's needs otherwise covered in AFDC-FC payments and the circumstance of the adopting parents but that shall not exceed the foster care maintenance payment that would have been paid based on the age related state-approved foster family home care rate, and any applicable specialized care increment, for a child placed in a licensed or approved family home pursuant to subdivisions (a) to (d), inclusive, of Section 11461. This subdivision shall only apply to adoption assistance agreements executed before January 1, 2010.

(1) Notwithstanding any other provision of this section, for adoption assistance agreements executed on or after January 1, 2010, the adoptive family shall be paid an amount of aid based on the child's needs otherwise covered in AFDC-FC payments and the circumstance of the adopting parents, but that amount shall not exceed the foster care maintenance payment, and any applicable specialized care increment, that the child received while

placed in a licensed or approved family home pursuant to subdivisions (a) to (d), inclusive, of Section 11461.

(2) For adoption assistance agreements executed on or after January 1, 2010, adoption assistance benefits shall not be increased based on age, as occurs for foster family homes pursuant to subdivisions (a) to (d), inclusive, of Section 11461. This paragraph shall not preclude any reassessments of the child's needs, consistent with other provisions of this chapter.

(b) Payment may be made on behalf of an otherwise eligible child in a state-approved group home or residential care treatment facility if the department or county responsible for determining payment has confirmed that the placement is necessary for the temporary resolution of mental or emotional problems related to a condition that existed prior to the adoptive placement. Out-of-home placements shall be in accordance with the applicable provisions of Chapter 3 (commencing with Section 1500) of Division 2 of the Health and Safety Code and other applicable statutes and regulations governing eligibility for AFDC-FC payments for placements in in-state and out-of-state facilities. The designation of the placement facility shall be made after consultation with the family by the department or county welfare agency responsible for determining the Adoption Assistance Program (AAP) eligibility and authorizing financial aid. Group home or residential placement shall only be made as part of a plan for return of the child to the adoptive family, that shall actively participate in the plan. Adoption Assistance Program benefits may be authorized for payment for an eligible child's group home or residential treatment facility placement if the placement is justified by a specific episode or condition and does not exceed an 18-month cumulative period of time. After an initial authorized group home or residential treatment facility placement, subsequent authorizations for payment for a group home or residential treatment facility placement may be based on an eligible child's subsequent specific episodes or conditions.

(c) (1) Payments on behalf of a child who is a recipient of AAP benefits who is also a consumer of regional center services shall be based on the rates established by the State Department of Social Services pursuant to Section 11464 and subject to the process described in paragraph (1) of subdivision (d) of Section 16119.

(2) (A) Except as provided for in subparagraph (B), this subdivision shall apply to adoption assistance agreements signed on or after July 1, 2007.

(B) Rates paid on behalf of regional center consumers who are recipients of AAP benefits and for whom an adoption assistance agreement was executed before July 1, 2007, shall remain in effect, and may only be changed in accordance with Section 16119.

(i) If the rates paid pursuant to adoption assistance agreements executed before July 1, 2007, are lower than the rates specified in paragraph (1) of subdivision (c) or paragraph (1) of subdivision (d) of Section 11464, respectively, those rates shall be increased, as appropriate and in accordance with Section 16119, to the amount set forth in paragraph (1) of subdivision

(c) or paragraph (1) of subdivision (d) of Section 11464, effective July 1, 2007. Once set, the rates shall remain in effect and may only be changed in accordance with Section 16119.

(ii) For purposes of this clause, for a child who is a recipient of AAP benefits or for whom the execution of an AAP agreement is pending, and who has been deemed eligible for or has sought an eligibility determination for regional center services pursuant to subdivision (a) of Section 4512, and for whom a determination of eligibility for those regional center services has been made, and for whom, prior to July 1, 2007, a maximum rate determination has been requested and is pending, the rate shall be determined through an individualized assessment and pursuant to subparagraph (C) of paragraph (1) of subdivision (c) of Section 35333 of Title 22 of the California Code of Regulations as in effect on January 1, 2007, or the rate established in subdivision (b) of Section 11464, whichever is greater. Once the rate has been set, it shall remain in effect and may only be changed in accordance with Section 16119. Other than the circumstances described in this clause, regional centers shall not make maximum rate benefit determinations for the AAP.

(3) Regional centers shall separately purchase or secure the services contained in the child's IFSP or IPP, pursuant to Section 4684.

(4) Regulations adopted by the department pursuant to this subdivision shall be adopted as emergency regulations in accordance with Chapter 3.5 (commencing with Section 11340) of Part 1 of Division 3 of Title 2 of the Government Code, and for the purposes of that chapter, including Section 11349.6 of the Government Code, the adoption of these regulations is an emergency and shall be considered by the Office of Administrative Law as necessary for the immediate preservation of the public peace, health, safety, and general welfare. The regulations authorized by this paragraph shall remain in effect for no more than 180 days, by which time final regulations shall be adopted.

(d) (1) In the event that a family signs an adoption assistance agreement where a cash benefit is not awarded, the adopting family shall be otherwise eligible to receive Medi-Cal benefits for the child if it is determined that the benefits are needed pursuant to this chapter.

(2) Regional centers shall separately purchase or secure the services that are contained in the child's Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP) or Individual Program Plan (IPP) pursuant to Section 4684.

(e) Subdivisions (a), (b), and (d) shall apply only to adoption assistance agreements signed on or after October 1, 1992.

(f) This section shall supersede the requirements of subparagraph (C) of paragraph (1) of Section 35333 of Title 22 of the California Code of Regulations.

SEC. 10. Section 16121.05 of the Welfare and Institutions Code is amended to read:

16121.05. (a) The department may recover any overpayments of financial assistance under the Adoption Assistance Program, and shall develop regulations that establish the means to recoup them, including an

appropriate notice of action and appeal rights, when the department determines either of the following applies:

(1) The adoptive parents are no longer legally responsible for the support of the child.

(2) The child is no longer receiving support from the adoptive family.

(3) The adoptive family has committed fraud in its application for, or reassessment of, the adoption assistance.

(b) Children on whose behalf an adoption assistance agreement had been executed prior to October 1, 1992, shall continue to receive adoption assistance in accordance with the terms of that agreement.

(c) Payment shall begin on or after the effective date of an adoption assistance agreement, or a deferred adoption assistance agreement, or a final decree of adoption, provided that the adoption assistance agreement has been signed by all required parties prior to or at the time the adoption decree is issued by the court. The amount and duration of assistance shall not be changed without the concurrence of the adoptive parents, unless any of the following has occurred:

(1) The child has attained 18 years of age, or 21 years of age where the child has a mental or physical disability that warrants the continuation of assistance.

(2) The adoptive parents are no longer legally responsible for the support of the child.

(3) The child is no longer receiving any support from adoptive parents.

SEC. 11. Section 16501.1 of the Welfare and Institutions Code is amended to read:

16501.1. (a) (1) The Legislature finds and declares that the foundation and central unifying tool in child welfare services is the case plan.

(2) The Legislature further finds and declares that a case plan ensures that the child receives protection and safe and proper care and case management, and that services are provided to the child and parents or other caretakers, as appropriate, in order to improve conditions in the parent's home, to facilitate the safe return of the child to a safe home or the permanent placement of the child, and to address the needs of the child while in foster care.

(b) (1) A case plan shall be based upon the principles of this section and shall document that a preplacement assessment of the service needs of the child and family, and preplacement preventive services, have been provided, and that reasonable efforts to prevent out-of-home placement have been made.

(2) In determining the reasonable services to be offered or provided, the child's health and safety shall be the paramount concerns.

(3) Reasonable services shall be offered or provided to make it possible for a child to return to a safe home environment, unless, pursuant to subdivisions (b) and (e) of Section 361.5, the court determines that reunification services shall not be provided.

(4) If reasonable services are not ordered, or are terminated, reasonable efforts shall be made to place the child in a timely manner in accordance

with the permanent plan and to complete all steps necessary to finalize the permanent placement of the child.

(c) (1) If out-of-home placement is used to attain case plan goals, the decision regarding choice of placement shall be based upon selection of a safe setting that is the least restrictive or most familylike and the most appropriate setting that is available and in close proximity to the parent's home, proximity to the child's school, consistent with the selection of the environment best suited to meet the child's special needs and best interests, or both. The selection shall consider, in order of priority, placement with relatives, tribal members, and foster family, group care, and residential treatment pursuant to Section 7950 of the Family Code.

(2) In addition to the requirements of paragraph (1), and taking into account other statutory considerations regarding placement, the selection of the most appropriate home that will meet the child's special needs and best interests shall also promote educational stability by taking into consideration proximity to the child's school attendance area.

(d) A written case plan shall be completed within a maximum of 60 days of the initial removal of the child or of the in-person response required under subdivision (f) of Section 16501 if the child has not been removed from his or her home, or by the date of the dispositional hearing pursuant to Section 358, whichever occurs first. The case plan shall be updated as the service needs of the child and family dictate. At a minimum, the case plan shall be updated in conjunction with each status review hearing conducted pursuant to Section 366.21, and the hearing conducted pursuant to Section 366.26, but no less frequently than once every six months. Each updated case plan shall include a description of the services that have been provided to the child under the plan and an evaluation of the appropriateness and effectiveness of those services.

(1) It is the intent of the Legislature that extending the maximum time available for preparing a written case plan from 30 to 60 days will afford caseworkers time to actively engage families, and to solicit and integrate into the case plan the input of the child and the child's family, as well as the input of relatives and other interested parties.

(2) The extension of the maximum time available for preparing a written case plan from the 30 to 60 days shall be effective 90 days after the date that the department gives counties written notice that necessary changes have been made to the Child Welfare Services Case Management System to account for the 60-day timeframe for preparing a written case plan.

(e) The child welfare services case plan shall be comprehensive enough to meet the juvenile court dependency proceedings requirements pursuant to Article 6 (commencing with Section 300) of Chapter 2 of Part 1 of Division 2.

(f) The case plan shall be developed as follows:

(1) The case plan shall be based upon an assessment of the circumstances that required child welfare services intervention. The child shall be involved in developing the case plan as age and developmentally appropriate.

(2) The case plan shall identify specific goals and the appropriateness of the planned services in meeting those goals.

(3) The case plan shall identify the original allegations of abuse or neglect, as defined in Article 2.5 (commencing with Section 11164) of Chapter 2 of Title 1 of Part 4 of the Penal Code, or the conditions cited as the basis for declaring the child a dependent of the court pursuant to Section 300, or all of these, and the other precipitating incidents that led to child welfare services intervention.

(4) The case plan shall include a description of the schedule of the social worker contacts with the child and the family or other caretakers. The frequency of these contacts shall be in accordance with regulations adopted by the State Department of Social Services. If the child has been placed in foster care out of state, the county social worker or a social worker on the staff of the social services agency in the state in which the child has been placed shall visit the child in a foster family home or the home of a relative, consistent with federal law and in accordance with the department's approved state plan. For children in out-of-state group home facilities, visits shall be conducted at least monthly, pursuant to Section 16516.5. At least once every six months, at the time of a regularly scheduled social worker contact with the foster child, the child's social worker shall inform the child of his or her rights as a foster child, as specified in Section 16001.9. The social worker shall provide the information to the child in a manner appropriate to the age or developmental level of the child.

(5) (A) When out-of-home services are used, the frequency of contact between the natural parents or legal guardians and the child shall be specified in the case plan. The frequency of those contacts shall reflect overall case goals, and consider other principles outlined in this section.

(B) Information regarding any court-ordered visitation between the child and the natural parents or legal guardians, and the terms and conditions needed to facilitate the visits while protecting the safety of the child, shall be provided to the child's out-of-home caregiver as soon as possible after the court order is made.

(6) When out-of-home placement is made, the case plan shall include provisions for the development and maintenance of sibling relationships as specified in subdivisions (b), (c), and (d) of Section 16002. If appropriate, when siblings who are dependents of the juvenile court are not placed together, the social worker for each child, if different, shall communicate with each of the other social workers and ensure that the child's siblings are informed of significant life events that occur within their extended family. Unless it has been determined that it is inappropriate in a particular case to keep siblings informed of significant life events that occur within the extended family, the social worker shall determine the appropriate means and setting for disclosure of this information to the child commensurate with the child's age and emotional well-being. These significant life events shall include, but shall not be limited to, the following:

(A) The death of an immediate relative.

(B) The birth of a sibling.

(C) Significant changes regarding a dependent child, unless the child objects to the sharing of the information with his or her siblings, including changes in placement, major medical or mental health diagnoses, treatments, or hospitalizations, arrests, and changes in the permanent plan.

(7) If out-of-home placement is made in a foster family home, group home, or other child care institution that is either a substantial distance from the home of the child's parent or out of state, the case plan shall specify the reasons why that placement is in the best interest of the child. When an out-of-state group home placement is recommended or made, the case plan shall, in addition, specify compliance with Section 7911.1 of the Family Code.

(8) Effective January 1, 2010, a case plan shall ensure the educational stability of the child while in foster care and shall include both of the following:

(A) An assurance that the placement takes into account the appropriateness of the current educational setting and the proximity to the school in which the child is enrolled at the time of placement.

(B) An assurance that the placement agency has coordinated with appropriate local educational agencies to ensure that the child remains in the school in which the child is enrolled at the time of placement, or, if remaining in that school is not in the best interests of the child, assurances by the placement agency and the local educational agency to provide immediate and appropriate enrollment in a new school and to provide all of the child's educational records to the new school.

(9) (A) If out-of-home services are used, or if parental rights have been terminated and the case plan is placement for adoption, the case plan shall include a recommendation regarding the appropriateness of unsupervised visitation between the child and any of the child's siblings. This recommendation shall include a statement regarding the child's and the siblings' willingness to participate in unsupervised visitation. If the case plan includes a recommendation for unsupervised sibling visitation, the plan shall also note that information necessary to accomplish this visitation has been provided to the child or to the child's siblings.

(B) Information regarding the schedule and frequency of the visits between the child and siblings, as well as any court-ordered terms and conditions needed to facilitate the visits while protecting the safety of the child, shall be provided to the child's out-of-home caregiver as soon as possible after the court order is made.

(10) If out-of-home services are used and the goal is reunification, the case plan shall describe the services to be provided to assist in reunification and the services to be provided concurrently to achieve legal permanency if efforts to reunify fail. The plan shall also consider in-state and out-of-state placements, the importance of developing and maintaining sibling relationships pursuant to Section 16002, and the desire and willingness of the caregiver to provide legal permanency for the child if reunification is unsuccessful.

(11) If out-of-home services are used, the child has been in care for at least 12 months, and the goal is not adoptive placement, the case plan shall include documentation of the compelling reason or reasons why termination of parental rights is not in the child's best interest. A determination completed or updated within the past 12 months by the department when it is acting as an adoption agency or by a licensed adoption agency that it is unlikely that the child will be adopted, or that one of the conditions described in paragraph (1) of subdivision (c) of Section 366.26 applies, shall be deemed a compelling reason.

(12) (A) Parents and legal guardians shall have an opportunity to review the case plan, and to sign it whenever possible, and then shall receive a copy of the plan. In any voluntary service or placement agreement, the parents or legal guardians shall be required to review and sign the case plan. Whenever possible, parents and legal guardians shall participate in the development of the case plan.

(B) Parents and legal guardians shall be advised that, pursuant to Section 1228.1 of the Evidence Code, neither their signature on the child welfare services case plan nor their acceptance of any services prescribed in the child welfare services case plan shall constitute an admission of guilt or be used as evidence against the parent or legal guardian in a court of law. However, they shall also be advised that the parent's or guardian's failure to cooperate, except for good cause, in the provision of services specified in the child welfare services case plan may be used in any hearing held pursuant to Section 366.21 or 366.22 as evidence.

(13) A child shall be given a meaningful opportunity to participate in the development of the case plan and state his or her preference for foster care placement. A child who is 12 years of age or older and in a permanent placement shall also be given the opportunity to review the case plan, sign the case plan, and receive a copy of the case plan.

(14) The case plan shall be included in the court report and shall be considered by the court at the initial hearing and each review hearing. Modifications to the case plan made during the period between review hearings need not be approved by the court if the casework supervisor for that case determines that the modifications further the goals of the plan. If out-of-home services are used with the goal of family reunification, the case plan shall consider and describe the application of subdivision (b) of Section 11203.

(15) If the case plan has as its goal for the child a permanent plan of adoption or placement in another permanent home, it shall include a statement of the child's wishes regarding their permanent placement plan and an assessment of those stated wishes. The agency shall also include documentation of the steps the agency is taking to find an adoptive family or other permanent living arrangements for the child; to place the child with an adoptive family, an appropriate and willing relative, a legal guardian, or in another planned permanent living arrangement; and to finalize the adoption or legal guardianship. At a minimum, the documentation shall include child-specific recruitment efforts, such as the use of state, regional,

and national adoption exchanges, including electronic exchange systems, when the child has been freed for adoption.

(16) (A) When appropriate, for a child who is 16 years of age or older, the case plan shall include a written description of the programs and services that will help the child, consistent with the child's best interests, prepare for the transition from foster care to independent living. The case plan shall be developed with the child and individuals identified as important to the child, and shall include steps the agency is taking to ensure that the child has a connection to a caring adult.

(B) During the 90-day period prior to the participant attaining 18 years of age or older as the state may elect under Section 475(8)(B)(iii) (42 U.S.C. Sec. 675(8)(B)(iii)) of the federal Social Security Act, whether during that period foster care maintenance payments are being made on the child's behalf or the child is receiving benefits or services under Section 477 (42 U.S.C. Sec. 677) of the federal Social Security Act, a caseworker or other appropriate agency staff or probation officer and other representatives of the participant, as appropriate, shall address, in the written transitional independent living plan, that is personalized at the direction of the child, information as detailed as the participant elects that shall include, but not be limited to, options regarding housing, health insurance, education, local opportunities for mentors and continuing support services, and workforce supports and employment services.

(g) If the court finds, after considering the case plan, that unsupervised sibling visitation is appropriate and has been consented to, the court shall order that the child or the child's siblings, the child's current caregiver, and the child's prospective adoptive parents, if applicable, be provided with information necessary to accomplish this visitation. This section does not require or prohibit the social worker's facilitation, transportation, or supervision of visits between the child and his or her siblings.

(h) The case plan documentation on sibling placements required under this section shall not require modification of existing case plan forms until the Child Welfare Services Case Management System is implemented on a statewide basis.

(i) When a child who is 10 years of age or older and who has been in out-of-home placement for six months or longer, the case plan shall include an identification of individuals, other than the child's siblings, who are important to the child and actions necessary to maintain the child's relationship with those individuals, provided that those relationships are in the best interest of the child. The social worker shall ask every child who is 10 years of age or older and who has been in out-of-home placement for six months or longer to identify individuals other than the child's siblings who are important to the child, and may ask any other child to provide that information, as appropriate. The social worker shall make efforts to identify other individuals who are important to the child, consistent with the child's best interests.

(j) The child's caregiver shall be provided a copy of a plan outlining the child's needs and services.

(k) On or before June 30, 2008, the department, in consultation with the County Welfare Directors Association and other advocates, shall develop a comprehensive plan to ensure that 90 percent of foster children are visited by their caseworkers on a monthly basis by October 1, 2011, and that the majority of the visits occur in the residence of the child. The plan shall include any data reporting requirements necessary to comply with the provisions of the federal Child and Family Services Improvement Act of 2006 (Public Law 109-288).

(l) The implementation and operation of the amendments to subdivision (i) enacted at the 2005–06 Regular Session shall be subject to appropriation through the budget process and by phase, as provided in Section 366.35.

SEC. 11.5. Section 16501.1 of the Welfare and Institutions Code is amended to read:

16501.1. (a) (1) The Legislature finds and declares that the foundation and central unifying tool in child welfare services is the case plan.

(2) The Legislature further finds and declares that a case plan ensures that the child receives protection and safe and proper care and case management, and that services are provided to the child and parents or other caretakers, as appropriate, in order to improve conditions in the parent's home, to facilitate the safe return of the child to a safe home or the permanent placement of the child, and to address the needs of the child while in foster care.

(b) (1) A case plan shall be based upon the principles of this section and shall document that a preplacement assessment of the service needs of the child and family, and preplacement preventive services, have been provided, and that reasonable efforts to prevent out-of-home placement have been made.

(2) In determining the reasonable services to be offered or provided, the child's health and safety shall be the paramount concerns.

(3) (A) In determining the reasonable services to be offered or provided, the case plan shall include information, to the extent possible, about a parent's incarceration in a county jail or the state prison during the time that a minor child of that parent is involved in dependency care. Once a consistent data entry field or fields have been designated in the statewide child welfare database, social workers shall make reasonable efforts to collect and update necessary data regarding a child's incarcerated parent or parents.

(B) In order to further the goals of this paragraph, the Legislature encourages the State Department of Social Services to consult with the county welfare directors regarding the best way to incorporate the information specified in subparagraph (A) as a required field in the statewide database. The Legislature also encourages the Department of Justice, the Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation, county welfare departments, and county sheriffs to develop protocols for facilitating the exchange of information regarding the location and sentencing of the incarcerated parent or parents of a minor child who is in dependency care.

(C) Nothing in this paragraph shall be interpreted to require the department to create a new dedicated field in the statewide database for incorporating the information specified in subparagraph (A).

(4) Reasonable services shall be offered or provided to make it possible for a child to return to a safe home environment, unless, pursuant to subdivisions (b) and (e) of Section 361.5, the court determines that reunification services shall not be provided.

(5) If reasonable services are not ordered, or are terminated, reasonable efforts shall be made to place the child in a timely manner in accordance with the permanent plan and to complete all steps necessary to finalize the permanent placement of the child.

(c) (1) If out-of-home placement is used to attain case plan goals, the decision regarding choice of placement shall be based upon selection of a safe setting that is the least restrictive or most familylike and the most appropriate setting that is available and in close proximity to the parent's home, proximity to the child's school, consistent with the selection of the environment best suited to meet the child's special needs and best interests, or both. The selection shall consider, in order of priority, placement with relatives, tribal members, and foster family, group care, and residential treatment pursuant to Section 7950 of the Family Code.

(2) In addition to the requirements of paragraph (1), and taking into account other statutory considerations regarding placement, the selection of the most appropriate home that will meet the child's special needs and best interests shall also promote educational stability by taking into consideration proximity to the child's school attendance area.

(d) A written case plan shall be completed within a maximum of 60 days of the initial removal of the child or of the in-person response required under subdivision (f) of Section 16501 if the child has not been removed from his or her home, or by the date of the dispositional hearing pursuant to Section 358, whichever occurs first. The case plan shall be updated as the service needs of the child and family dictate. At a minimum, the case plan shall be updated in conjunction with each status review hearing conducted pursuant to Section 366.21, and the hearing conducted pursuant to Section 366.26, but no less frequently than once every six months. Each updated case plan shall include a description of the services that have been provided to the child under the plan and an evaluation of the appropriateness and effectiveness of those services.

(1) It is the intent of the Legislature that extending the maximum time available for preparing a written case plan from 30 to 60 days will afford caseworkers time to actively engage families, and to solicit and integrate into the case plan the input of the child and the child's family, as well as the input of relatives and other interested parties.

(2) The extension of the maximum time available for preparing a written case plan from the 30 to 60 days shall be effective 90 days after the date that the department gives counties written notice that necessary changes have been made to the Child Welfare Services Case Management System to account for the 60-day timeframe for preparing a written case plan.

(e) The child welfare services case plan shall be comprehensive enough to meet the juvenile court dependency proceedings requirements pursuant to Article 6 (commencing with Section 300) of Chapter 2 of Part 1 of Division 2.

(f) The case plan shall be developed as follows:

(1) The case plan shall be based upon an assessment of the circumstances that required child welfare services intervention. The child shall be involved in developing the case plan as age and developmentally appropriate.

(2) The case plan shall identify specific goals and the appropriateness of the planned services in meeting those goals.

(3) The case plan shall identify the original allegations of abuse or neglect, as defined in Article 2.5 (commencing with Section 11164) of Chapter 2 of Title 1 of Part 4 of the Penal Code, or the conditions cited as the basis for declaring the child a dependent of the court pursuant to Section 300, or all of these, and the other precipitating incidents that led to child welfare services intervention.

(4) The case plan shall include a description of the schedule of the social worker contacts with the child and the family or other caretakers. The frequency of these contacts shall be in accordance with regulations adopted by the State Department of Social Services. If the child has been placed in foster care out of state, the county social worker or a social worker on the staff of the social services agency in the state in which the child has been placed shall visit the child in a foster family home or the home of a relative, consistent with federal law and in accordance with the department's approved state plan. For children in out-of-state group home facilities, visits shall be conducted at least monthly, pursuant to Section 16516.5. At least once every six months, at the time of a regularly scheduled social worker contact with the foster child, the child's social worker shall inform the child of his or her rights as a foster child, as specified in Section 16001.9. The social worker shall provide the information to the child in a manner appropriate to the age or developmental level of the child.

(5) (A) When out-of-home services are used, the frequency of contact between the natural parents or legal guardians and the child shall be specified in the case plan. The frequency of those contacts shall reflect overall case goals, and consider other principles outlined in this section.

(B) Information regarding any court-ordered visitation between the child and the natural parents or legal guardians, and the terms and conditions needed to facilitate the visits while protecting the safety of the child, shall be provided to the child's out-of-home caregiver as soon as possible after the court order is made.

(6) When out-of-home placement is made, the case plan shall include provisions for the development and maintenance of sibling relationships as specified in subdivisions (b), (c), and (d) of Section 16002. If appropriate, when siblings who are dependents of the juvenile court are not placed together, the social worker for each child, if different, shall communicate with each of the other social workers and ensure that the child's siblings are informed of significant life events that occur within their extended

family. Unless it has been determined that it is inappropriate in a particular case to keep siblings informed of significant life events that occur within the extended family, the social worker shall determine the appropriate means and setting for disclosure of this information to the child commensurate with the child's age and emotional well-being. These significant life events shall include, but shall not be limited to, the following:

(A) The death of an immediate relative.

(B) The birth of a sibling.

(C) Significant changes regarding a dependent child, unless the child objects to the sharing of the information with his or her siblings, including changes in placement, major medical or mental health diagnoses, treatments, or hospitalizations, arrests, and changes in the permanent plan.

(7) If out-of-home placement is made in a foster family home, group home, or other child care institution that is either a substantial distance from the home of the child's parent or out of state, the case plan shall specify the reasons why that placement is in the best interest of the child. When an out-of-state group home placement is recommended or made, the case plan shall, in addition, specify compliance with Section 7911.1 of the Family Code.

(8) Effective January 1, 2010, a case plan shall ensure the educational stability of the child while in foster care and shall include both of the following:

(A) An assurance that the placement takes into account the appropriateness of the current educational setting and the proximity to the school in which the child is enrolled at the time of placement.

(B) An assurance that the placement agency has coordinated with appropriate local educational agencies to ensure that the child remains in the school in which the child is enrolled at the time of placement, or, if remaining in that school is not in the best interests of the child, assurances by the placement agency and the local educational agency to provide immediate and appropriate enrollment in a new school and to provide all of the child's educational records to the new school.

(9) (A) If out-of-home services are used, or if parental rights have been terminated and the case plan is placement for adoption, the case plan shall include a recommendation regarding the appropriateness of unsupervised visitation between the child and any of the child's siblings. This recommendation shall include a statement regarding the child's and the siblings' willingness to participate in unsupervised visitation. If the case plan includes a recommendation for unsupervised sibling visitation, the plan shall also note that information necessary to accomplish this visitation has been provided to the child or to the child's siblings.

(B) Information regarding the schedule and frequency of the visits between the child and siblings, as well as any court-ordered terms and conditions needed to facilitate the visits while protecting the safety of the child, shall be provided to the child's out-of-home caregiver as soon as possible after the court order is made.

(10) If out-of-home services are used and the goal is reunification, the case plan shall describe the services to be provided to assist in reunification and the services to be provided concurrently to achieve legal permanency if efforts to reunify fail. The plan shall also consider in-state and out-of-state placements, the importance of developing and maintaining sibling relationships pursuant to Section 16002, and the desire and willingness of the caregiver to provide legal permanency for the child if reunification is unsuccessful.

(11) If out-of-home services are used, the child has been in care for at least 12 months, and the goal is not adoptive placement, the case plan shall include documentation of the compelling reason or reasons why termination of parental rights is not in the child's best interest. A determination completed or updated within the past 12 months by the department when it is acting as an adoption agency or by a licensed adoption agency that it is unlikely that the child will be adopted, or that one of the conditions described in paragraph (1) of subdivision (c) of Section 366.26 applies, shall be deemed a compelling reason.

(12) (A) Parents and legal guardians shall have an opportunity to review the case plan, and to sign it whenever possible, and then shall receive a copy of the plan. In any voluntary service or placement agreement, the parents or legal guardians shall be required to review and sign the case plan. Whenever possible, parents and legal guardians shall participate in the development of the case plan.

(B) Parents and legal guardians shall be advised that, pursuant to Section 1228.1 of the Evidence Code, neither their signature on the child welfare services case plan nor their acceptance of any services prescribed in the child welfare services case plan shall constitute an admission of guilt or be used as evidence against the parent or legal guardian in a court of law. However, they shall also be advised that the parent's or guardian's failure to cooperate, except for good cause, in the provision of services specified in the child welfare services case plan may be used in any hearing held pursuant to Section 366.21 or 366.22 as evidence.

(13) A child shall be given a meaningful opportunity to participate in the development of the case plan and state his or her preference for foster care placement. A child who is 12 years of age or older and in a permanent placement shall also be given the opportunity to review the case plan, sign the case plan, and receive a copy of the case plan.

(14) The case plan shall be included in the court report and shall be considered by the court at the initial hearing and each review hearing. Modifications to the case plan made during the period between review hearings need not be approved by the court if the casework supervisor for that case determines that the modifications further the goals of the plan. If out-of-home services are used with the goal of family reunification, the case plan shall consider and describe the application of subdivision (b) of Section 11203.

(15) If the case plan has as its goal for the child a permanent plan of adoption or placement in another permanent home, it shall include a

statement of the child's wishes regarding their permanent placement plan and an assessment of those stated wishes. The agency shall also include documentation of the steps the agency is taking to find an adoptive family or other permanent living arrangements for the child; to place the child with an adoptive family, an appropriate and willing relative, a legal guardian, or in another planned permanent living arrangement; and to finalize the adoption or legal guardianship. At a minimum, the documentation shall include child-specific recruitment efforts, such as the use of state, regional, and national adoption exchanges, including electronic exchange systems, when the child has been freed for adoption.

(16) (A) When appropriate, for a child who is 16 years of age or older, the case plan shall include a written description of the programs and services that will help the child, consistent with the child's best interests, prepare for the transition from foster care to independent living. The case plan shall be developed with the child and individuals identified as important to the child, and shall include steps the agency is taking to ensure that the child has a connection to a caring adult.

(B) During the 90-day period prior to the participant attaining 18 years of age or older as the state may elect under Section 475(8)(B)(iii) (42 U.S.C. Sec. 675(8)(B)(iii)) of the federal Social Security Act, whether during that period foster care maintenance payments are being made on the child's behalf or the child is receiving benefits or services under Section 477 (42 U.S.C. Sec. 677) of the federal Social Security Act, a caseworker or other appropriate agency staff or probation officer and other representatives of the participant, as appropriate, must address, in the written transitional independent living plan, that is personalized at the direction of the child, information as detailed as the participant elects that shall include, but not be limited to, options regarding housing, health insurance, education, local opportunities for mentors and continuing support services, and workforce supports and employment services.

(g) If the court finds, after considering the case plan, that unsupervised sibling visitation is appropriate and has been consented to, the court shall order that the child or the child's siblings, the child's current caregiver, and the child's prospective adoptive parents, if applicable, be provided with information necessary to accomplish this visitation. This section does not require or prohibit the social worker's facilitation, transportation, or supervision of visits between the child and his or her siblings.

(h) The case plan documentation on sibling placements required under this section shall not require modification of existing case plan forms until the Child Welfare Services Case Management System is implemented on a statewide basis.

(i) When a child who is 10 years of age or older and who has been in out-of-home placement for six months or longer, the case plan shall include an identification of individuals, other than the child's siblings, who are important to the child and actions necessary to maintain the child's relationship with those individuals, provided that those relationships are in the best interest of the child. The social worker shall ask every child who

is 10 years of age or older and who has been in out-of-home placement for six months or longer to identify individuals other than the child's siblings who are important to the child, and may ask any other child to provide that information, as appropriate. The social worker shall make efforts to identify other individuals who are important to the child, consistent with the child's best interests.

(j) The child's caregiver shall be provided a copy of a plan outlining the child's needs and services.

(k) On or before June 30, 2008, the department, in consultation with the County Welfare Directors Association and other advocates, shall develop a comprehensive plan to ensure that 90 percent of foster children are visited by their caseworkers on a monthly basis by October 1, 2011, and that the majority of the visits occur in the residence of the child. The plan shall include any data reporting requirements necessary to comply with the provisions of the federal Child and Family Services Improvement Act of 2006 (Public Law 109-288).

(l) The implementation and operation of the amendments to subdivision (i) enacted at the 2005–06 Regular Session shall be subject to appropriation through the budget process and by phase, as provided in Section 366.35.

SEC. 12. Section 7.5 of this bill incorporates amendments to Section 16119 of the Welfare and Institutions Code proposed by both this bill and AB 154. It shall only become operative if (1) both bills are enacted and become effective on or before January 1, 2010, (2) each bill amends Section 16119 of the Welfare and Institutions Code, and (3) this bill is enacted after AB 154, in which case Section 7 of this bill shall not become operative.

SEC. 13. Section 11.5 of this bill incorporates amendments to Section 16501.1 of the Welfare and Institutions Code proposed by both this bill and SB 118. It shall only become operative if (1) both bills are enacted and become effective on or before January 1, 2010, (2) each bill amends Section 16501.1 of the Welfare and Institutions Code, and (3) this bill is enacted after SB 118, in which case Section 11 of this bill shall not become operative.

SEC. 14. No appropriation pursuant to Section 15200 of the Welfare and Institutions Code shall be made for the purpose of implementing this act.

SEC. 15. No reimbursement is required by this act pursuant to Section 6 of Article XIII B of the California Constitution for certain costs that may be incurred by a local agency or school district because, in that regard, this act creates a new crime or infraction, eliminates a crime or infraction, or changes the penalty for a crime or infraction, within the meaning of Section 17556 of the Government Code, or changes the definition of a crime within the meaning of Section 6 of Article XIII B of the California Constitution.

However, if the Commission on State Mandates determines that this act contains other costs mandated by the state, reimbursement to local agencies and school districts for those costs shall be made pursuant to Part 7

(commencing with Section 17500) of Division 4 of Title 2 of the Government Code.

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